

# critical digest

Vol. 11 No. 21

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The Weekly That Keeps You Informed of the Current Broadway Critical Scene

## N.Y. Opening This Week

The Consul-Barrymore, 3/15/50. Gian-Carlo Menotti's new musical drama produced by Chandler Cowles and Efrem Zimbalist, Jr. arrives in the wake of cheers of "bravo" from Philadelphia's citizens and critics. Directed by Mr. Menotti the cast features Marie Powers and Patricia Neway.

## Shows That Closed

The Bird Cage-Coronet, 2/22/50-3/11/50. "Pretty hackneyed stuff" was the general critical opinion of Arthur Laurents play starring Melvyn Douglas. Pollock, Compass, and Sheaffer, Eagle, considered the show worthy of a visit, but the other critics, daily, magazine and trade, panned the show. Clurman, New Republic critic and director of show, admitted that the script was provocative but unfulfilled work. His task as director was to fill the gaps in the script's creative scheme. Krutch, Nation, deemed the show "stale", the direction "irritating".

## Daily Reviewers Look at the New Play

Tobacco Road-48th Street Theatre, 3/6/50. The Jack Kirkland adaptation of Erskine Caldwell's tale found three of the daily reviewers on its side. Hawkins, World Telegram and Sun, Pollock, Compass, and Field, Newark News, considered the Negro Drama Group production a worthy revival of the documentary play. But the other daily critics rated it boring, poorly done, and not worth the effort. Coleman, Mirror, had a split opinion; he thought it was well done, but he still didn't like it.

## Magazine Reviewers View The Shows

Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep-Broadhurst, 3/2/50. Diverse opinions from the weekly critics on Elaine Ryan's adaptation of the Bemelmans book. Gibbs, New Yorker, recommended show for those who appreciate the original in the theatre. Francis, Billboard, okayed the show as fun in the mad manner, though he doubted its commercial prospects. But critics from Cue, Time, Newsweek and Variety thought the play was overpopulated in players, scenes and poor writing. Gabriel, Cue, considers it the "most rococoed play I ever saw". Several suggested that any venture this size must be done as a musical not as straight comedy.

Come Back, Little Sheba-Booth, 2/15/50. Defining a good play as "one that embodies a true experience of life in an honest and absorbing manner," Clurman, New Republic, rates the Theatre Guild production of William Inge's new play as good. It gives a picture of true Americana that has become rare on the stage. Blackmer and Booth come into their own as true artists. Clurman also praised director Mann for one of the best jobs of the season.

Arms and the Girl-46th Street Theatre, 2/2/50. One fresh dance number and Pearl Bailey are the main attributes Clurman, New Republic, found in the Theatre Guild musical. The rest was "perfunctory".

## News and Notes

Joseph Wood Krutch, Nation, is back reviewing plays after a leave due to illness. Margaret Marshall subbed...Harold Clurman is going to vacation in Europe...Theatre Guild to sponsor nightly 20 minute shows on WMCA (N.Y.) plugging their four shows...Caricatures of critics on sign above Winter Garden continue with blank balloons for "quotes". Costs \$900 to paint edited phrases in, so it will remain blank until house has a hit.

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' The Green Room Department '  
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**THE PLACE OF THE CRITIC...**Are drama critics important in these lurid days of the cold war, pondered Watts, Post. He thinks the answer is yes. In an era of madness and violence, he realizes, one of the few sensible, civilized and civilizing institutions left to mankind is the theatre. Thus the critic's job is to cherish, encourage and interpret it.

**THREE CENT ACTING LESSON...**The continuous course in the theatre by Chapman, News, took up the subject of "How To Be An Actor". The student, after discovering that the onstage actor didn't really kiss the girl, eat the food, play the piano, or smoke the pipe decided that he didn't want to be an actor after all. Professor Chapman noted this as the most intelligent remark he has ever heard from a student. Class dismissed.

**REGINA UNDERGROUND...**Sheaffer, Eagle, sincerely hopes that Marc Blitzstein will do some more work on Regina to make it all his own. The critic is sure that the musical drama, which was a flop on Broadway earlier this season, will receive the revival it deserves. But when it does come back, he would like to see Blitzstein's touch on the entire play.

**TWO GOOD U.S. PLAYS...**Looking over the 41 productions which have opened since September Hawkins, World Telegram and Sun, picked The Velvet Glove and Come Back, Little Sheba as the two really successful new American plays. He didn't count revivals of classics or adaptations of books from novels or stories in making his choice.

**INTERVIEW ROUNDUP...**Don Hammer, who plays the paranoid in The Man, and feature writer Joseph Mackey, World Telegram and Sun, found it was very easy entering a Bronx housewife's home using a phony business card...Melvyn Douglas didn't let Hollywood change him because he arrived there a "grown adult" he told Pollock, Compass. Douglas, who appeared in The Bird Cage, considers himself a man of the theatre, and would like to take a show on the road...Michael Arlen, famed author of The Green Hat, is working on his autobiography, but he would like to do an intelligent play, he revealed to Morehouse, World Telegram and Sun. Arlen thinks Caesar and Cleopatra is the best comedy in town...Shirley Booth, co-star of Come Back, Little Sheba, is a little peeved with the critics, she complained to Sheaffer, Eagle. She thinks they underrated the value of the play. She knows it is a fine play because she is stimulated emotionally as she plays in it.

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' The Lighter Side '  
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**CAPSULE COMMENTS...**"Pistol Packin' Delmar" is Hi Phillips, World Telegram and Sun idea of the proceedings at Texas Li'l Darlin'. His comment on the new theatre code which is supposed to make tickets easier to get is "wanna bet?"

**NEW TYPE MOVIE REVIEWS...**Silly Milly, the cartoon creation of the Post's Stan McGovern has developed a new kind of movie review that he is convinced will kill the movies before the industry kills the 20 percent tax. Typical example is "Mrs. Mike -- about a homesick ex-announcer who wishes he was back in radio because he 'Mrs.' Mike." Drama critics please take cover.

**HORSE REVIEWS...**The white horse George Washington rides onstage in Arms and the Girl will probably become famous. The owner of the horse used in the Philadelphia tryouts knows this; he is convinced his nag would have won better first night reviews from the critics than the New York horse drew.

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' Checking the Ads '  
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NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP...Display ads and publicity to the contrary, Atkinson, Times, didn't rave about the new Elaine Ryan comedy adapted from the Bemelmans novel. The critic did praise the performances of Mr. and Mrs. Frederic March, but he considered the play itself very heavy going with many people huffing and puffing around for no apparent purpose. The thing that made it bearable, he wrote, were the rare phrases of pure Bemelmans.

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' Off Broadway Shows '  
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SAINT JOAN...Though Atkinson's Sunday N.Y. Times article praised the idea behind the Equity Library Players in bringing to the non-playgoers theatre at low prices, he penned their production of the GBS play which was presented at the Clinton Community Center in the Bronx. The whole production was pallid, the direction was on the limp side. This drama of stature, the critic observed, might have been too much for such a group to handle.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE...Watts, Post, had complained that he had never seen this Shakespeare comedy. The City College Theatre Workshop gave him his chance. The play the reviewer considers the most fascinating of all the Bard's writings was given a worthwhile production.

WHEN THE BOUGH BREAKS...Childbirth in a lying-in hospital is one of those intrinsically dramatic subjects that make for interesting plays no matter how bad the subject is handled. Atkinson, Times, commented after viewing the new play at the Abbe Practical Workshop, written by Robert S. Scott and John L. Gerstad. The play was loosely flung together, the second act maudlin, but thanks to the fine acting the play remained interesting, he concluded.

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' Key to NYC Criticism At a Glance '  
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Critics are rated as to how they like the show, not if they think it will be a hit. "So-So" means the critic did not state directly if he recommended the show for an entertaining or stimulating evening. Photostats of reviews may be obtained at 25 cents each to subscribers, 50 cents each to others.

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|------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. NY Times                  | 11. Newark News         | 21. Catholic World  |
| 2. NY Herald Tribune         | 12. Women's Wear Daily  | 22. Commonweal      |
| 3. NY News                   | 13. Daily Worker        | 23. Cue             |
| 4. NY Mirror                 | 14. Wall Street Journal | 24. Chr.Sci.Monitor |
| 5. NY Compass (Star, PM)     | 15. Journal of Commerce | 25. Sat.Review Lit. |
| 6. NY Post                   | 16. George Jean Nathan  | 26. Newsweek        |
| 7. NY Sun (Morehouse)        | 17. Morning Telegraph   | 27. Time            |
| 8. NY Journal American       | 18. Variety             | 28. Nation          |
| 9. NY World Telegram and Sun | 19. Billboard           | 29. New Republic    |
| 10. Brooklyn Eagle           | 20. Theatre Arts        | 30. New Yorker      |

All You Need Is One Good Break-Mansfield, 2/9/50-2/11/50. Reopened 2/20/50.

Pro: 17. Con: 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10-11-12-16-18-19-23-27-30.

Arms and the Girl-46th Street Theatre, 2/2/50. Pro: 3-4-5-10-11-12-13-14-17-19-23-24-30. Con: 1-7-8-16-18-29. So-So: 2-6-9-26-27.

As You Like It-Cort, 1/26/50. Pro: 3-4-6-7-9-10-11-12-16-17-18-19-22-26-29. Con: 2-23-24-27-30. So-So: 5-8-14-28.

Caesar and Cleopatra-National, 12/21/49. Pro: 26 votes. Con: 5-8-13. So-So: 9



Clutterbuck-Biltmore, 12/3/49. Pro: 3-5-6-7-8-12-15-17-19-20-21-23-27-30.  
Con: 1-9-11-13-16-18-22-24-26-28-29. So-So: 2-4-10-14.

The Cocktail Party-Miller, 1/2/50. Pro: 2-3-4-5-6-7-8-10-11-12-15-17-18-19-23-24-26-27-28. Con: 1-9-14-22-25-29. So-So: 16-30.

Come Back, Little Sheba-Booth, 2/15/50. Pro: 1-5-8-9-10-11-14-16-17-18-19-22-23-26-29. Con: 2-4-7-12-27. So-So: 3-6-30.

Death of a Salesman-Moresco, 2/10/49. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 29. So-So: 27.

Detective Story-Hudson, 3/23/49. Pro: 1-2-3-4-6-7-8-9-12-14-15-17-18-19-20-21-22-23-26-27-30. None: 5-10-11-13-16-24-25-28-29.

The Devil's Disciple-Royale, 2/21/50. Pro: 1-2-3-4-5-6-8-9-10-11-12-18-19-22-23-26-29. Con: 30. So-So: 16.

Gentlemen Prefer Blondes-Ziegfeld, 12/8/49. Pro: 20 votes. Con: 6-21-28.  
So-So: 16-22-27.

The Happy Time-Plymouth, 1/24/50. Pro: 19 votes. Con: 5-6-7-26-27-30.  
None: 13-20-21.

I Know My Love-Shubert, 11/1/49. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 5-16-22-27-28-29. None: 13

The Innocents-Playhouse, 2/1/50. Pro: 23 votes. Con: 2-4-28-29-30. None: 20-21.

Kiss Me, Kate-Century, 12/31/48. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 29. None: 28.

Lost In The Stars-Music Box, 10/30/49. Pro: 1-2-3-5-6-7-10-11-12-14-15-17-18-19-23-26. Con: 8-9-13-20-21-22-24-25-28-29-30. So-So: 4-27.

The Man-Fulton, 1/19/50. Pro: 2-4-8-10-11-14-15-23-26. Con: 1-3-5-6-9-12-13-16-19-22-27-30. So-So: 7-17-18.

The Member of the Wedding-Empire, 1/5/50. Pro: 25 votes. So-So: 2-27-30. None: 21

Miss Liberty-Imperial, 7/15/49. Pro: 4-7-8-12-17-19. Con: 1-2-18-20-22-23-25-27-29. So-So: 3-6-9-21-26.

Mister Roberts-Alvin, 2/13/48. Pro: 24 votes. Con: 21-24. So-So: 13-16-17. None: 28

Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep-Broadhurst, 3/2/50. Pro: 2-10-12-15-19-30. Con: 1-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-14-17-18-23-27. So-So: 26.

South Pacific-Majestic, 4/8/49. Pro: 1-2-3-4-6-7-8-9-12-15-17-18-19-20-21-24-25-26-30. Con: 27. So-So: 23. None: 5-10-11-13-14-16-22-28-29.

Texas Li'l Darlin'-Hellinger, 11/25/49. Pro: 3-6-9-12-13-14-15-16-17-21-22-24. Con: 1-4-7-8-18-19-23-29-30. So-So: 2-5-10-11-20-26-27. None: 25-28.

Tobacco Road-48th Street Theatre, 3/6/50. Pro: 5-9-11. Con: 1-2-3-4-6-8-17.

Touch and Go-Broadway, 10/13/49. Pro: 17 votes. Con: 2-4-5-7-14-18-19-22-29. So-So: 8-10. None: 25.

The Velvet Glove-Golden, 12/26/49. Pro: 15 votes. Con: 2-5-16-18-22-23-27-30. So-So: 1-6-29. None: 25-28.

Where's Charley?-St. James, 10/11/48. Pro: 16 votes. Con: 6-7-12-13-16-19-22-24-25-26. So-So: 4-27. None: 10-28.

